



**REGION 6 REGIONAL RESPONSE TEAM (RRT)
SEMI - ANNUAL REPORT**

Period: July, 1992 – December, 1992

Recent Activities

A. Meetings, Calls and Exercises

(1) RRT Semi-Annual Meeting held July 27-30, 1992, in Corpus Christi, Texas.

(2) Teleconference Calls and Subjects covered:

a. July 10, 1992

1. RRT Meeting in Corpus Christi, TX.
2. Update on Mechanical Recovery Conference
3. Dispersant and Elastol Pre-approval of Requests
4. Key Personnel Changes

b. September 30, 1992

1. NOAA E-Mail
2. Updates on Dispersant Use Plan
3. Progress of Work Group on Bioremediation
4. ITOL Letter
5. FY-93 Workplan
6. Elastol

c. October 5, 1992

1. First Phone Conference on Greenhill, Petroleum Well Blowout.

d. October 8, 1992

1. Greenhill Petroleum Update.

(3) Exercises

- a. August 6, 1992, FEMA "No Prior Notice" Earth-quake Notification and Deployment Exercise with activation of and deployment to ROC in Denton, Texas and EOC in Little Rock, AR.
- b. December, 1992, EPA Headquarters initiated "No Prior Notice" Exercise with instructions to each Regional ESF #10 that it alert its support agencies and report back to EPA Headquarters within a designated time period.
- c. EPA Region V1 representation at the FEMA Comprehensive Hazmat Emergency Response Capabilities Assessment Program (CHERCAP), exercises at Hurst, TX on August 12, 1992; Harlingen, TX on September 1-11, 1992; Brownsville, TX on October 7-10, 1992.

B. Incidents

- (1) Hurricane Andrew, on August 24, 1992, Region VI was given a "heads up" notice that it might be activated to respond on this event. FEMA Region VI activated its ROC on August 25, 1992, and tasked certain personnel of EPA Region VI to preposition at the ROC in Denton, TX, and at the EOC in Louisiana. The Haz-Mat releases caused by the hurricane were very few in number and of so little significance that Region VI ESF #10 was not tasked for specific response.

- (2) Explosion ammonia/lube oil release at Arcadian Fertilizer Plant, Westlake, Calcasieu Parish, LA. On July 28, 1992, at approximately 1900 hours, an explosion occurred at the plant, centered around an Urea Reactor. Louisiana State Police Hazardous Materials Unit (LSP); Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality; Air Quality Division; and Hazardous Waste Division (LEDQ); LARCO Environmental Services; and the collective Westlake Industrial Plants' Fire Department and Local Emergency Planning Committee Representatives responded to the incident

LEDQ confirmed that Interstate 10 (approximately 500 feet north of the plant) was closed, covering a stretch approximately 5 miles east of the plant due to an Urea release onto the highway.

LSP revealed that shelter-in-place orders for Westlake and Lake Charles had occurred shortly after the explosion. The Arcadian Plant was completely shut down, including utilities to the Urea reactor and the ammonia feed. According to LDP, no fire resulted from the explosion; however, the industrial plant's fire department used water spray to reduce airborne vapors of ammonia throughout the night. Approximately forty-two gallons of lube oil escaped into the Calcasieu River, resulting from the fire water movement. LARCO boomed the oil for later retrieval. No fish kill was reported.

- (3) Crude Oil Release/Fire near Morgan City, LA. On September 29, 1992, MSO Morgan City and MSD Houma received a report from Greenhill Petroleum Corporation of an oil spill as a result of a kelly hose rupture. Initial reports were that the rig was losing 60 bbls. of oil per hour. The slick was reported as five miles long and 50 to 60 yards wide.

Riddell-Peterson was hired as primary contractor. The firm of Boots and Coots, specialists in well blowouts, was hired to stop the leak.

On the first of October a spark ignited a fire on the rig, injuring one worker from Boots and Coots. Subsequent efforts were concentrated on extinguishing the fire before capping of the well. This was completed by removing the burned workover rig from around the well head using four large tugs and two dredges.

The fire was extinguished and the well capped at 6:20 p.m. on the 9th of October. An estimated 462,000 gallons of oil was lost from the rig.

- (4) Crude oil/Brine Release near Port Barre, LA. On October 29, 1992, the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LEDQ), received an anonymous complaint regarding a crude oil and produced water (brine) release near Port Barre, St. Landry Parish, Louisiana. The spill was reported to be coming from a pipeline leading from a tank battery to a salt water injection well. The mixture was coming from a break in the flow line and shooting approximately 3-5 feet into the air. Oil traveled several hundred yards down an agricultural/drainage coulee towards Bayou Portage, as evidenced by oil marks on vegetation on both sides of the coulee. An area, approximately 3-5 acres in size had been completely "killed" by the brine water and trees and palmettos in the area had oil marks 1-3 feet above the ground.

The site is located in a wetlands area on the northwestern edge of the Atchafalaya Basin, a pristine Louisiana wilderness.

EPA Region VI Emergency Response Branch dispatched TAT to respond and investigate the situation.

TAT observed a replaced pipeline section at the release source with no evidence of any on-going release.

- (5) Nitric Acid/Nitric Oxide/Nitrogen Dioxide/Uranium release at the Sequoyah Fuels Facility in Gore, OK. - On Tuesday, November 17, 1992, at 09:00 the Sequoyah Fuels nuclear materials processing facility, in Gore, Sequoyah County, OK, had a chemical reaction in a digestion tank where uranium yellowcake is added to nitric acid. The release was caused when the nitric acid was added to a tank thought to be empty but actually contained uranium yellowcake. This caused an exothermic reaction which released nitric acid (HNO₃), nitric oxide (NO), and nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), along with slight amounts of uranium, into the atmosphere.

The reaction continued for 10 to 15 minutes, releasing an estimated 23,000 cubic feet of nitrogen dioxide, which drifted northwest from the facility across the Illinois River (200 feet from the facility), up the far river bank, and through the Midwestern Tree Nursery which borders the river.

Eight Sequoyah Fuels employees reported experiencing various symptoms after the incident including throat, eye and skin irritation.

At the time of the release three men were fishing on the Illinois River. According to one of the men, the plume enveloped the boat and the three experienced eye and throat irritation along with headaches and nausea.

Twenty-four workers at Midwestern Tree Nursery also complained of varying degrees of eye, skin and throat irritation; nausea and headaches.

On November 19-20, 1992, the Technical Assistance Team (TAT), investigated the incident. Areas of the investigation included: root cause of the release, release quantity, plume modeling, emergency procedures followed, re-entry procedures, off-site notification and lack of proper personal protective equipment.

- (6) Pipeline Rupture Oil Release near Homer, LA. At approximately 1900 on December 4, 1992, a high pressure shutoff switch stopped a pump station compressor at the Sugar Creek Production Facility of Washataw Energy. An eight inch petroleum pipeline from the pump station to Dubach Gas Co., of Homer, LA, blew immediately before the compressor shut down. The problem was noted approximately 1930 on December 4, 1992, when the pump station brought the compressor back on-line and could not achieve the proper pressure. Dubach began checking the 11 miles of pipeline and surrounding creeks between the Sugar Creek Facility and Dubach Gas Company.

A rupture was found in the line approximately 8.2 miles from the pumping station. A ten foot section of pipe peeled apart and a thin layer of oil sprayed on vegetation 500 feet from the rupture. The pipeline ruptured where it crossed Bullock Creek, approximately 6 miles upstream of Bayou D'Arbonne.

One-fourth (1/4) mile of Bullock Creek contained oil from bank to bank. Dubach Gas Co. deployed sorbent and containment booms to stop the downstream flow of oil and notified the Louisiana State Police, the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LEDQ), and the National Response Center (NRC). It was later determined that 15 bbls of oil had been released. Dubach Gas Co. employed Arkansas Vacuum Company to pickup oil in the stream and Covington Company, Inc. to repair the ruptured pipeline and perform cleanup operations.

- (7) Sunken Jack Up Vessel Oil Release near Corpus Christi, TX.. On November 23, 1992, a sheen was discovered coming from the sunken jack up vessel in Texas State waters near Corpus Christi. The COTP federalized the spill while continuing to contact the RP.

Garner Environmental was contracted to secure the leak. Divers were sent down and placed a rubber patch on the vessel to secure the leak. After the MSO contacted the RP, it agreed to hire a salvage team to raise the vessel.

On 3 December the owner contacted the MSO asking for a letter requiring the company to remove the vessel due to it being a hazard to navigation. on 7 December the salvage company departed to scene awaiting notification of the RP's insurance company to resume operations.

On 10 December the Texas General Land Office assumed responsibility for monitoring the vessel and operation due to its location in State waters.

After further observation, sheening had stopped and it was decided that salvage of the vessel was not required.

- (8) Vessel/Barge Collision Sulphur Release in Ship Channel, Houston, TX.. As a result of a collision of 231 December between M V Juraj Dalmatine and the tank barge Duval 2 with a full load of sulphur, the barge was ruptured and sank just below buoys 51 and 52 on the east edge of the Houston Ship Channel (HSC). The responsible party is Penzoil Sulphur.

Due to the location of the barge in relation to the channel, the HSC was restricted to one-way traffic in the area. On several occasions the channel was closed at that location due to fog or reduced visibility.

Penzoil solicited bids to have the barge scrapped in place. By 5 February approximately 50% of the barge had been removed. On 16 March the final two quarters were recovered and placed on a deck barge.

Surveying the Channel with divers it was determined that the right side of ascending lane was obstructed by an accumulation of sulphur. This was removed by clam bucket and hopper barge on a "not to interfere with traffic" basis.

- (9) Gas Well Blowout Oil/Hydrogen Sulfide Release at Mississippi River South Pass Block Pass, LA. On the morning of 26 December 1992, MSO New Orleans received a call reporting a gas well blowout off the mouth of the Mississippi River. An initial report was of a slick extending from the well twohundred feet wide by fourteen miles long, with high concentrations of hydrogen sulfide.

MSO pollution teams were dispatched via Coast Guard Helicopters to survey the sight of the well blowout. The responsible party was identified as ARCO Gas and Oil.

The firm of Boots and Coots was contracted to cap the well while Clean Gulf was hired as the cleanup contractor.

An RRT conference call was initiated by the Eighth Coast Guard District to members of the RRT for consideration to use dispersants on the oil. Preapproval was granted in accordance with the plan submitted.

The first attempt to cap the well on 26 December was unsuccessful. The second attempt at 1300 on 28 December was successful after a sufficient pressure loss allowed crews to close the blowout preventer. Air monitoring teams confirmed safe conditions after the well capping. MSO, NOLA, OSC and ARCO Oil and Gas estimated accumulative total of ten barrels of crude oil spilled.

C. Activities General

1. On July 27-28, 1992, the RRT attended the Physical Recovery of Spills seminar on the Corpus Christi State University campus. Included as part of the seminar was a demonstration of the use of booms and skimmers at the James C. Storm Pavilion located near the "turn around basin" of Corpus Christi Harbor. Agenda attached.
2. Following the seminar, the Region VI Regional Response Team conducted its committee meetings and general session at the Marriott Hotel in Corpus Christi on July 28-30, 1992. Agenda attached.
3. There were two (2) new resolutions passed in the general session; the first, approval of the Upper Texas Coast and Western Louisiana Coast Dispersant Use Plan (ITOL); and second, approval of amendment of Article 10, Section 4 of the by-laws to authorize the RRT to have executive sessions.

D. Status of RCP

1. Revision of the RCP has been completed and draft copies are to be available at the upcoming RRT semi-annual meeting in Stillwater, OK, July 26-28, 1993.

E. Technical Assistance Provided or Plans Reviewed by RRT

1. NONE

F. Training

1. The 8th Coast Guard District in cooperation with Region VI RRT planned and conducted on July .0-7-28, 1992 a seminar on the Physical Recovery of Spills at Corpus Christi State University. Approximately 300 attended.

II. Organizational Changes

- A. Capt. Thomas C. Greene, USCG 8th District, retired as of June 1, 1993, will be replaced by Capt. Jim Calhoun as Co-Chair of the RRT.
- B. CDR Phil Wieczynski, USCG 8th District, Chief of Marine Environmental Protection Branch, has been re-assigned to Guam as Executive Officer. His replacement will be CDR Dick Blais, formerly the RRT Coordinator.
- C. Succeeding CDR Blais in the position of RRT Coordinator will be LCDR Phil Glenn.

III. Operational Issues

A. New Agreements

1. Reciprocal MOUs between Region VI and IX for support in the event that either Region's capabilities and resources are inadequate for appropriate response to a catastrophic disaster.

B. Dispersants

1. Approval is being sought on the ITOL and Chevron Shipping Company's pre-authorization dispersant use plans.

C. Future Plans

1. Determination of location and date of next RRT semi-annual meeting.